The Relationship Between Social Media Usage and Body Image Among High School Female Students in Baghdad

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A R T I C L E I N F O

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Social Media Use, Body Images, Relationship, Adolescent Girls

Abstract

Objectives: This study aims to explore the relationship between social media usage and body image perceptions among high school female students in Baghdad.

Methods: A descriptive correlational study was conducted among high school students from Rusafa Second and Third Education Directorates, Baghdad, from November 2022 to May 2023. Data were collected using a self-reported questionnaire, which included demographic information, a social media usage scale, and a body image assessment scale. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 26.0.

Results: The findings revealed that 52% of the participants had moderate levels of social media use, while 74.5% demonstrated a neutral body image. A significant correlation was observed between social media usage and body image perceptions, indicating that common content and time spent on social media predicted body image among the students. Additionally, significant differences were identified based on age, grade, and monthly income in relation to both social media use and body image. The study also highlighted a negative impact of excessive social media use on body image.

Conclusions: There is a significant relationship between social media usage and body image among high school female students. Prolonged social media engagement negatively influences body image perceptions.

Recommendations: It is recommended that the Ministry of Education supports initiatives that provide education on the effects of social media usage. Further research should focus on the impact of social media on adolescent mental health, and parents should actively monitor and manage their children's social media engagement to promote positive body image and self-confidence.

What is already known about the topic? Contraceptive method usage varies significantly based on sociodemographic factors such as age, education, income, and marital status. Typically, higher education and income levels are associated with increased use of modern contraceptives. Additionally, cultural and religious factors can influence contraceptive choices and access. Comparative analyses help identify disparities and target interventions to improve contraceptive access and education across different demographic groups.

Introduction

Social media has transformed how people communicate and interact in today's digital age, particularly among adolescents. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become integral parts of daily life, enabling individuals to connect, share information, and engage in various forms of entertainment. While social media provides many benefits, such as maintaining relationships and accessing information, it also presents certain risks. One of the growing concerns is its impact on body image, especially among adolescents (Huang, Peng, & Ahn, 2021). Adolescents are in a critical developmental stage characterized by rapid physical, social, and emotional changes. During this period, young people are often vulnerable to external influences, including the portrayal of unrealistic beauty standards on social media. These platforms frequently showcase idealized body types, which may contribute to body dissatisfaction and negative self-perception (Perloff, 2014). Previous research has shown that social media use is linked to increased body dissatisfaction and other mental health concerns, including anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (Sukamto, Hamidah, & Fajrianthi, 2019). Furthermore, social comparison plays a crucial role in adolescents' interactions on social media. By comparing their appearance to that of peers, celebrities, and influencers, adolescents may develop feelings of inadequacy, which can lead to a distorted body image (Boursier, Gioia, & Griffiths, 2020). As social media usage continues to rise among teenagers, understanding its impact on body image becomes increasingly important, particularly in regions like Iraq, were cultural and societal influences shape young people's perceptions of beauty.

This study investigates the relationship between social media usage and body image among high school female students in Baghdad, Iraq. It seeks to identify the extent to which social media influences adolescents' body perceptions and whether certain demographic factors, such as age and socioeconomic status, play a role in shaping these perceptions.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive correlational research design to explore the relationship between social media usage and body image among high school female students in Baghdad. The study was conducted in schools under the Directorate of Education Rusafa Second and Third. The research spanned from November 2022 to May 2023.

Participants

The study population consisted of high school female students enrolled in the Rusafa Second and Third Directorates of Education. A total of 20 high schools were selected using a probability sampling approach. The study included a sample of 560 students, representing approximately 10% of the total student population in the selected schools. Participants were selected using a systematic random sampling method to ensure representativeness.

Ethical Considerations

The research protocol was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Review Board of the College of Nursing, University of Baghdad. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection, and they were assured of confidentiality and anonymity throughout the study.

Data Collection Instruments
The data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire that comprised three sections:

1. **Demographic Data**: This section gathered information on participants' age, grade, monthly income, and the most commonly used devices and social media platforms.

2. **Social Media Usage Scale**: The Social Media Engagement Scale for Adolescents (SMES-A), developed by Ni et al. (2020), was employed to measure the extent of social media usage. The scale consists of 11 items rated on a 3-point Likert scale (1 = Always, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Never), with total scores ranging from 11 to 33.

3. **Body Image Scale**: A body image scale was developed based on a review of the literature and previous studies. This scale contains 48 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), with scores ranging from 48 to 240. Higher scores indicated a more positive body image.

Data Collection Procedure
The data collection process took place between March 11 and March 30, 2023. The questionnaires were distributed to participants during school hours. Participants were given instructions on how to complete the forms, and any questions they had were addressed by the researchers. On average, it took 15 to 20 minutes for participants to complete the questionnaire.

Data Analysis
All collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS version 26.0. Descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages, were calculated to summarize demographic information and the results of the social media and body image scales. Correlational analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between social media usage and body image. Additionally, linear regression was used to assess the predictive value of social media usage on body image. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

Results

Demographic Characteristics
The demographic characteristics of the participants are summarized in Table 1. The study sample included 560 high school female students, with a mean age of 16.71 years (SD = 0.88). The majority of participants were 16 years old (50%), followed by 17-year-olds (35.4%), while the smallest age group was 20 years old (1.1%). Regarding grade level, 39.5% of participants were in the fifth grade, followed by 38% in the fourth grade, and 22.5% in the sixth grade. In terms of socioeconomic status, 43.9% of students reported having a "somehow enough" monthly income, 39.5% reported "enough" income, and 16.6% reported "not enough" income.

Most participants used mobile phones as their primary device for social media (75.2%), followed by laptops (14.8%) and iPads (10.0%). The most common type of content consumed on social media was entertainment (71.6%), while sports content had the lowest engagement (2.0%). YouTube was the most frequently used platform (43.9%), while Facebook was the least used (14.1%). Participants reported spending 3 to 5 hours per day on social media (33.8%), with a smaller percentage using social media for more than 7 hours per day (12.5%).

Social Media Usage and Body Image
The study found that 52% of the participants had moderate levels of social media usage, with a mean score of 20.25 (SD = 4.31), while 33.9% reported high

social media usage, and 14.1% reported low usage. The assessment of body image revealed that 74.5% of participants had a neutral body image, 23.9% had a positive body image, and only 1.6% reported a negative body image (Table 2). The mean body image score was 168.7 (SD = 22.88).

Correlation Between Social Media Usage and Body Image

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between social media usage and body image. The analysis revealed a significant negative correlation between social media usage and body image (r = -.222, p < .001), indicating that higher social media usage is associated with more negative body image perceptions. Additionally, the time spent on social media was negatively correlated with body image (r = -.171, p < .001), while the type of content consumed had a positive correlation with body image (r = .084, p = .040).

Regression Analysis

A linear regression analysis was performed to examine the predictive effect of social media usage on body image. The analysis indicated that social media usage significantly predicted body image (β = -.222, p < .001), explaining 4.9% of the variance in body image scores. Time spent on social media (β = -

.171, p < .001) and the type of content consumed (β = .084, p = .040) also emerged as significant predictors of body image. However, the most commonly used device and social media platform did not have a significant impact on body image (p > .05).
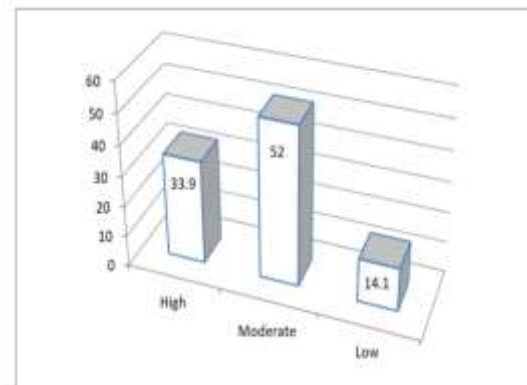
Fig.1. Overall Social Media Uses
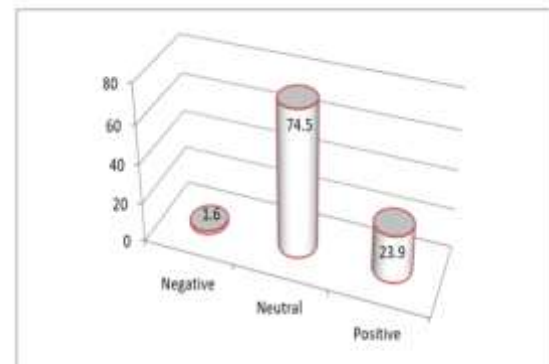
Fig. 2. Overall Body-image Assessment

Table (1): Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Elements	Classification	No.	%
	16 years old	280	50.0
	17 years old	198	35.4
	18 years old	52	9.3
	19 years old	24	4.3
Age/years	20 years old	6	1.1
	16.71 ± 0.88		
	Fourth	213	38.0
Grade	Fifth	221	39.5
	Sixth	126	22.5
	Enough	221	39.5
Monthly Income	Somehow enough	246	43.9
	Not enough	93	16.6
	Mobile phone	421	75.2
Most used Device	IPAD	56	10.0
	Laptop	83	14.8
	Entertaining	401	71.6
	Health and Beauty	59	10.5
Most common content of social	Sports	11	2.0
media	Cook	22	3.9
	General information	33	5.9
	Celebrity lives	34	6.1
	Facebook	79	14.1
Most used platform	Instagram	134	23.9
	YouTube	246	43.9
	Tiktok	101	18.0
	<1 hour	78	13.9
	1 to less than 3 hours	133	23.8
	3 to less than 5 hours	189	33.8
	5 to less than7 hours	90	16.1
Time spent on device use	More than 7 hours	70	12.5

Table (2): Overall Social Media Uses among High School Female Students

Scales	Min.	Max.	M	SD	Score	No.	%
Social Media Effect (11Q)	**12**	**31**	**20.25**	**4.31**	**High (11-18.33)**	**190**	**33.9**
					Moderate (18.34-25.66)	**291**	**52.0**
					Low (25.67-33)	**79**	**14.1**
					Total	**560**	**100**

Min.: Minimum; Max.: Maximum, M: Mean for total score, SD=Standard Deviation for total score

Table (3) Overall Body-image Assessment among High School Female Students

Scales	Min.	Max.	M	SD	Score	No.	%
					Negative (48-112)	9	1.6
Body-image					Neutral (112.1-176)	417	74.5
(48Q)	48	198	168.7	22.88	Positive (167.1-240)	134	23.9
					Total	560	100.0

The results showed that (74.5%) of the high school female students expressed a neutral assessment of body-image (*Mean=158.7; SD=22.88*).

Table 4-. Liner Regression among the Study Variables in Predict the Body-image

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	*Sig.*
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Most used Device	.053	.028	.086	1.910	.057
Common content	.020	.010	.084	2.058	.040
Most used platform	.037	.020	.076	1.873	.062
Time spent on the device	-.064-	.016	-.171-	-4.126-	.000
Social media	-.152-	.032	-.222-	-4.782-	.000

Dependent Variable: Body-image

Discussion

This study provides valuable insights into the relationship between social media usage and body image among high school female students in Baghdad, Iraq. The findings highlight that most participants exhibit moderate social media engagement and neutral perceptions of their body image. These results align with previous studies suggesting that social media plays a significant role in shaping adolescent body image perceptions (Perloff, 2014; Sukamto et al., 2019).

Social Media and Body Image

The correlation between social media use and body image was found to be statistically significant, indicating that higher levels of social media engagement are associated with more negative body image perceptions. This finding supports the body of literature that suggests exposure to idealized images and content on social media can foster feelings of inadequacy, leading to dissatisfaction with one's own appearance (Rodgers et al., 2020). The negative impact of prolonged time spent on social media further emphasizes the need to address the influence of social comparison, a phenomenon where users compare themselves to curated, often unrealistic portrayals of beauty and success (Boursier et al., 2020). This is especially important during adolescence, a critical period of self-identity development, where individuals are particularly susceptible to external influences such as social media (Perloff, 2014).

The study found that specific content, such as health and beauty, positively correlates with body image concerns. This reinforces earlier research showing that adolescents who consume content related to beauty standards are more likely to experience body dissatisfaction (Hogue & Mills, 2019). Conversely, content focused on entertainment showed a less detrimental impact, suggesting that not all social media content negatively affects body image, and that the type of content plays a key role in shaping these perceptions.

Demographic Influence

Demographic factors such as age and socioeconomic status were also found to influence social media usage and body image. Younger students and those from higher-income families were more likely to report higher levels of social media usage. This could be due to increased access to digital devices and platforms, as well as greater exposure to the types of content that may promote idealized beauty standards. These findings are consistent with studies showing that adolescents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds often have greater access to technology, which can exacerbate the

effects of social media on body image (Perrin, 2015).

Practical Implications

The results of this study have important implications for both educators and parents. Given the significant relationship between social media usage and body image, it is crucial that schools implement educational programs that address the potential risks associated with excessive social media use. Such programs could focus on promoting media literacy, helping students critically evaluate the content they encounter online, and encouraging healthier, more realistic perceptions of body image. Furthermore, parents, especially mothers, have a critical role in monitoring and guiding their children's social media usage. By fostering open communication about the pressures of social media, parents can help mitigate its negative effects and support their children in developing a positive self-image.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides meaningful insights, there are limitations to consider. The sample was limited to female high school students in Baghdad, which may not be representative of other regions or male adolescents. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the study does not allow for conclusions about causality. Future research should explore longitudinal designs to better understand the long-term effects of social media on body image and examine how these relationships may differ across gender and cultural contexts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study underscores the significant impact of social media on body image among high school female students in Baghdad. The findings highlight the need for targeted interventions that promote healthier social media habits and support adolescents in developing positive body image perceptions. Addressing this issue is critical in fostering the overall well-being of young people as they navigate the complexities of adolescence in a digital world.

Declaration

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